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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: BUSH'S POLICIES; ISLAMOPHOBIA; NATIONAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

1. Summary: Al-Bayan criticizes Bush administration policies, and describes the decline of the President's popularity both at home and abroad. A UAE columnist in Al-Khaleej is skeptical of the UAE's intention to engage in political reform, due to continued delays in scheduling the dates for elections. A columnist in Al-Bayan criticizes the Western perspective of Islam as hypocritical given the larger scale of atrocities committed by other nations. Finally Al-Bayan notes the decline in President Bush's popularity, even within his own Republican Party. End Summary.

2. Under headline "Policies that led to isolation and repulsion", 06/21, main editorial in the Dubai-based Arabic daily "Al-Bayan" (circulation 90,000) stated the following:

"Two and a half years before the end of his final term, President Bush seems to be at a terrible impasse. If things continue on their present course, he could well end up leaving the White House in the worst possible conditions both externally and internally, as he continues to isolate himself both domestically and internationally... In Vienna today to participate in an EU-US summit, President Bush is facing blatant criticism from several European capitals. Furthermore, he is to be met by crowds of human rights demonstrators... Worse yet, a new international survey conducted by the United Press has recently revealed that 70% of the 91,000 people surveyed in different countries are unhappy with Washington's policies and desire a more balanced world superpower. Here the Bush administration reaps what it has sown in Iraq and Palestine... The only solution to this situation is increased opposition to these policies, both for the United States' and the world's benefit.

3. Under headline "Deferred national council", UAE columnist Dr. Abdul Khaliq Abdullah wrote in an 06/20 op-ed in the Sharjah-based Pan-Arab daily "Al-Khaleej" (circulation 85,000):

"The highly anticipated elections due to occur in coming months will be useful but still modest, as only an extremely limited 4,000 individuals will actually participate. While the scale of the electorate remains modest, this development still acts as a transitional step in the proper direction and will help pave the way to free and direct elections where all male and female nationals will have the right to vote... The political reform process in the UAE demonstrates a constitutional defect in federal and local relations. For a long time the local governments have played a primary role in hindering the national council's reform efforts. Now they are practicing the same obstructionist role, delaying advancement through their hesitation to present candidate names to election committees... Ultimately it is evident that political reforms are destined to be stalled as long as these local and federal conflicts persist. Yet resolving them requires legal changes that cannot be easily achieved without the new national council."

4. Under the headline "Islamophobia", columnist Magdi Shendi wrote in an 06/20 editorial in the Dubai-based Arabic daily "Al-Bayan," (circulation 90,000):

"The West portrays Islamists like Frankenstein's monster, desperate to destroy everything, including their creator. It is interesting that such fears are propagated by a series of lies advanced by the Western media and intelligence agencies. These lies are believed by many people including Muslims, but are not backed by reality beyond a few isolated incidents... While the atrocities of the Serbs, Israelis, Japanese and Americans are glossed over, only Islamic terrorism (if there is such a thing) continues to be emphasized... Don't these conditions belittle the minds of Arabs? I think so. In this state of affairs, the Islamic courts in Somalia, Hamas in Palestine, and the resistance in Iraq can be viewed as good forces if and only if they serve Washington."

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